

Agency: Commerce, Community and Economic Development**Grants to Named Recipients (AS 37.05.316)****Grant Recipient: Alaska Farmers Market Association****Federal Tax ID: 26-3948661****Project Title:****Project Type: Other**

Alaska Farmers Market Association - SNAP/WIC/Senior Coupon Doubling Programs at Alaska

State Funding Requested: \$500,000**House District: Statewide (1-40)**

One-Time Need

Brief Project Description:

This project provides "double bucks" for SNAP and WIC recipients to spend at farmers markets, as well as additional funding for the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program.

Funding Plan:

Total Project Cost:	\$500,000
Funding Already Secured:	(\$0)
FY2023 State Funding Request:	<u>(\$500,000)</u>
Project Deficit:	\$0

Funding Details:

This project under the Alaska Farmers Market Association has not been funded previously by the state.

Detailed Project Description and Justification:

This project provides "double bucks" for SNAP and WIC recipients to spend at farmers markets, as well as additional funding for the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program. Markets, in addition to CSAs, food hubs, and farm stands improve access to healthy local foods by providing regular opportunities for purchasing and interaction between farmers and local communities, as well as supporting a more equitable local food system through participation in food assistance programs like SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program -- also known as QUEST in Alaska), Senior Nutrition, and WIC (Women Infants Children). This project will build more robust local food markets while increasing food security for our most vulnerable Alaskans.

Background Information

The Alaska Farmers Market Association, AFMA, is a nonprofit organization committed to supporting and promoting vibrant and sustainable farmers' markets throughout Alaska. Since 2006, the number of farmers markets in Alaska has more than tripled, growing from 13 markets in 2006 to 41 in 2017. In 2021, the Alaska Farmers Market Association (AFMA) counted 56, with more being planned. According to the 2017 NASS Agricultural Census, Alaska ranked first in the nation in terms of new farms, with most of these operations being small, under 10 acres. In addition, Alaska's direct sales have continued to rise over the last decade.

Farmers markets, along with CSAs (community supported agriculture), food hubs, and farm stands, are integral to this

growth. AFMA has created the general framework to support statewide farmers market management, training, and promotion, providing direct benefits to Alaska's farmers markets vendors and customers. We've worked with state agencies to provide information, training, and technical support around various topics, like food safety, SNAP programs, and pandemic mitigation and pivots.

Farmers markets provide both social and economic benefits to farmers and communities. Farmers markets provide space for farmers to reconnect with consumers and capture retail dollars for their fresh, high-quality, locally grown products. For communities, farmers markets are family-friendly, community-building events that bring neighbors together, attract retail activity to surrounding businesses, create forums for civic education and involvement and provide direct access to Alaska's agricultural bounty.

Markets, in addition to CSAs, food hubs, and farm stands improve access to healthy local foods by providing regular opportunities for purchasing and interaction between farmers and local communities, as well as supporting a more equitable local food system through participation in food assistance programs like SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program -- also known as QUEST in Alaska), Senior Nutrition, and WIC (Women Infants Children).

Funding Request

Proposed Budget: \$500,000

From 2011-2013, the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services piloted a successful program with Alaska's farmers markets to build capacity for markets to accept SNAP benefits on behalf of their local farmers, fishers, and value-added producers. The program also provided matching dollars to help launch these initiatives at markets statewide. For example, markets were able to utilize funding to purchase equipment, hire coordinators, and match their SNAP dollars each week - \$20 in SNAP turned into \$40 in local products sold and consumed.

The Alaska Farmers Market Association seeks funding to replicate and expand this project, building off the success of the Kenai Local Food Connection, which has piloted a doubling program at Central Peninsula markets that included SNAP as well as WIC and Senior Nutrition.

Expanding local markets improves food security for Alaskans by increasing access to fresh, local foods. It also creates economic stimulus by providing more solid and consistent sales opportunities for Alaska's farmers. In turn, these farmers have a greater incentive to increase their production and reach economies of scale that bring local food prices down to a competitive level.

Our markets are drastically underfunded with many operating on volunteer kindness alone. This five-year funding would provide immense opportunities to build market capacity while increasing sales for producers.

Project funding would include the following:

- Dollars to double benefits at all eligible farmers markets, farm stands, CSAs, and food hubs
- One-time purchases of SNAP equipment
- Internet or cellular access for running equipment
- Technical assistance for farmers and market managers for setting up benefits programs
- Market-based program coordinators
- AFMA-based Coordinator to manage statewide program

Supplies (like checks for reimbursement)
Market script/ vouchers for matching
Advertising to promote double up matching program
Chef demonstrations, focusing on simple, and healthy food preparation

Project Timeline:

Proposed project timeline is 5 years; Year ONE includes outreach and program creation, along with technical assistance to onboard markets and farmers to be able to accept SNAP, WIC, and SFMNP. The following years will be program implementation and evaluation. Most expenditures will occur after year one.

Entity Responsible for the Ongoing Operation and Maintenance of this Project:

Farmers Markets and farmers

Grant Recipient Contact Information:

Name: Robbi Mixon
Title: Executive Director
Address: 3734 Ben Walters Ln
Homer, Alaska 99603
Phone Number: (907)235-4068
Email: info@alaskafarmersmarkets.org

Has this project been through a public review process at the local level and is it a community priority? ☐ Yes ☒ No